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ABSTRACT

Tribal Colleges were created over the last 30 years in response to the higher education needs of American Indians, and to serve geographically isolated populations that have no other means of accessing education beyond the high school level. Tribal colleges combine personal attention with cultural relevance in order to encourage American Indians to overcome barriers to higher education. The reservations on which most tribal colleges are located face unemployment rates of up to 70%. In addition, only 65% of American Indians and Alaskan natives over 25 were high school graduates in 1990, compared with 75% of the total U.S. population. Tribal colleges receive little or no funding from state governments; however, the federal government has set them apart from mainstream institutions and is committed to providing funding. Tribal colleges depend on funds distributed through the tribally controlled College or University Assistance Act of 1978 (TCCUAA). Title I authorizes funding of up to $6,000 per Indian student, but the current funding is only $2,964 per student. Title III funding is authorized at $10 million but has never exceeded $1 million. To make up for these shortfalls, most tribal colleges charge fees that are high, given the poverty levels of the communities they serve. (Contains 30 references.) (NB)

TRIBAL COLLEGES AN INTRODUCTION

Prepared by:
American Indian Higher Education Consortium
The Institute for Higher Education Policy

A product of the Tribal College Research and Database Initiative, a collaborative effort between the American Indian Higher Education Consortium and the American Indian College Fund

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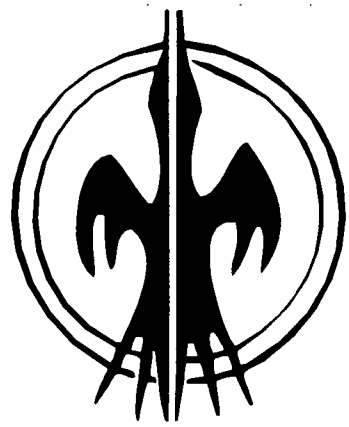
WHAT ARE TRIBAL COLLEGES?



Tribal Colleges were created over the last 30 years in response to the higher education needs of American Indians, and generally serve geographically isolated populations that have no other means of accessing education beyond the high school level. They have become increasingly essential to educational opportunity for American Indian students, a status they have achieved in a relatively brief period of time. Tribal Colleges are unique institutions that combine personal attention with cultural relevance, in such a way as to encourage American Indians—especially those living on reservations—to overcome the barriers in higher education.

This report highlights various aspects of both the institutions and their students, including enrollment, financing, curricula, and the challenges they face. It uses the most recent data available to describe the current status and historical trends.

The Socioeconomic Context

An understanding of Tribal Colleges begins within the context of the socioeconomic circumstances of American Indians:

- The reservations on which most Tribal Colleges are located face high unemployment rates—up to 70 percent on the Cheyenne River reservation, which is home to Cheyenne River Community College—and low per capita income levels (American Indian College Fund, 1996). Income disparities between American Indians and the general U.S. population are wide.

- In addition, educational attainment for American Indians is lower than in the general population. Overall, 65 percent of American Indians and Alaskan Natives 25 years and older were high school graduates in 1990, compared to 75 percent of the total U.S. population (Pavel et al., 1995). High school completion rates are even lower for American Indians living on reservations; in the Navajo Nation, for example, only 41 percent are high school graduates (EDA, 1996).

In addition to these economic and educational hurdles, there are many social barriers to American Indians' postsecondary success. The suicide rate for American Indians is more than twice that of other racial/ethnic minority groups, the death rate from alcohol-related causes is very high, and the large number of single-parent households continues to increase. Cultural and language differences often present difficulties to students (Pavel et al., 1995), and the geographic isolation of most reservations often inhibits student access to or persistence in mainstream colleges.

As a result of all these obstacles, American Indian participation in postsecondary education and degree attainment is low. In 1995, American Indians accounted for approximately 130,000 students, or less than 1 percent of all students in higher education. The majority of those enrolled attended two-year institutions rather than four-year schools. Despite progress in recent years, American Indians earned less than 1 percent of all the associate's, bachelor's, and advanced degrees conferred in 1994. In 1995, the graduation rate for American Indians at a group of more than 300 colleges and universities was only 37 percent, the lowest among major ethnic minority groups (Carter and Wilson, 1997). American Indians living on reservations may be only half as likely as their white counterparts to persist and attain a degree (Pavel et al., 1995). College participation, retention, and degree completion therefore remain critical issues.

Meanwhile, American Indian populations have become increasingly younger. According to 1990 Census data, 40 percent of American Indians and Alaskan Natives were under 20 years of age, compared to 28 percent of the total population (Pavel et al., 1995). Given this trend, quality higher education that is effective for American Indian students is essential for the future.

The Tribal College Movement

The history of American Indian higher education over the last several hundred years is one of compulsory Western methods of learning, recurring attempts to eradicate tribal culture, and high dropout rates by American Indian students at mainstream institutions. In reaction to this history, American Indian leaders built on the success of the "self-determination" movement of the 1960s to rethink tribal higher education. These leaders recognized the growing importance of postsecondary education, and became convinced that it could strengthen reservations and tribal culture without assimilation (Boyer, 1997). In 1968 the Navajo Nation created the first tribally controlled college—now called Diné College—and other Tribal Colleges quickly followed in California, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Today, there are 28 tribally chartered colleges and three federally chartered Indian colleges in a total of 12

states.[1] The tribally controlled institutions were chartered by one or more tribes and are locally managed, while the federally chartered institutions are governed by national boards.

Collectively called "Tribal Colleges," these institutions are in varying stages of development, and differ in their structures, sizes, and other characteristics. Nevertheless, they share some basic commonalities (O'Brien, 1992; Boyer, 1997; Pavel et al., 1995):

- most are less than 25 years old;
- most have relatively small student bodies that are predominantly American Indian;
- most are located on remote reservations, with limited access to other colleges;
- most were chartered by one or more tribes, but maintain their distance from tribal governments;
- all have open admissions policies; and
- all began as two-year institutions.

In addition, all Tribal Colleges are fully accredited by regional accrediting agencies, with the exception of three colleges that are candidates for accreditation. All of the colleges offer associate's degrees and virtually all offer certificates or degrees for programs of less than two years. Furthermore, four colleges offer bachelor's degrees and two offer master's degrees. Because most of the students are commuters and facilities are limited, only eight colleges provide housing, and just six provide board or meal plans.[2]

In many ways, Tribal Colleges are similar to mainstream community colleges. However, the trait that distinguishes them from other community colleges is their dual mission: 1) to rebuild, reinforce and explore traditional tribal cultures, using uniquely designed curricula and institutional settings; and at the same time 2) to address Western models of learning by providing traditional disciplin-

The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC)

The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) is a unique—and uniquely American Indian—organization. It was founded in 1972 by the presidents of the nation's first six Tribal Colleges, as an informal collaboration among member colleges. Today, AIHEC has grown to represent 31 colleges in the United States and one Canadian institution. Unlike most professional associations, it is governed jointly by each member institution.

AIHEC's mission is to support the work of these colleges and the national movement for tribal self-determination. Its mission statement, adopted in 1973 and amended in 1984, identifies the following objectives: maintain commonly held standards of quality in American Indian education; assure participation in the foundation and administration of educational legislation, policy, rules, regulations, and budgets; assist Tribal Colleges in establishing a secure financial base; and encourage greater participation by American Indians in the development of higher education policy.

ary courses that are transferrable to four-year institutions (Tiemey, 1992).

Another important asset of Tribal Colleges is their ability to provide personalized attention to their students, in order to overcome the economic and social barriers to postsecondary success they face (Federico Cunningham and Parker, 1998). Tribal Colleges are committed to fostering a family-like atmosphere and strong personal relationships between students and faculty (Tiemey, 1992).

In another outgrowth of service to their communities, Congress recently designated Tribal Colleges as land-grant institutions, in recognition of the essential ties between the colleges, tribal lands, and local economic development.

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[1] There is also one Canadian institution that is a member of AIHEC.

[2] White Earth Tribal and Community College and Little Priest Tribal College are generally not included in the statistics presented in this report, due to their recent establishment.

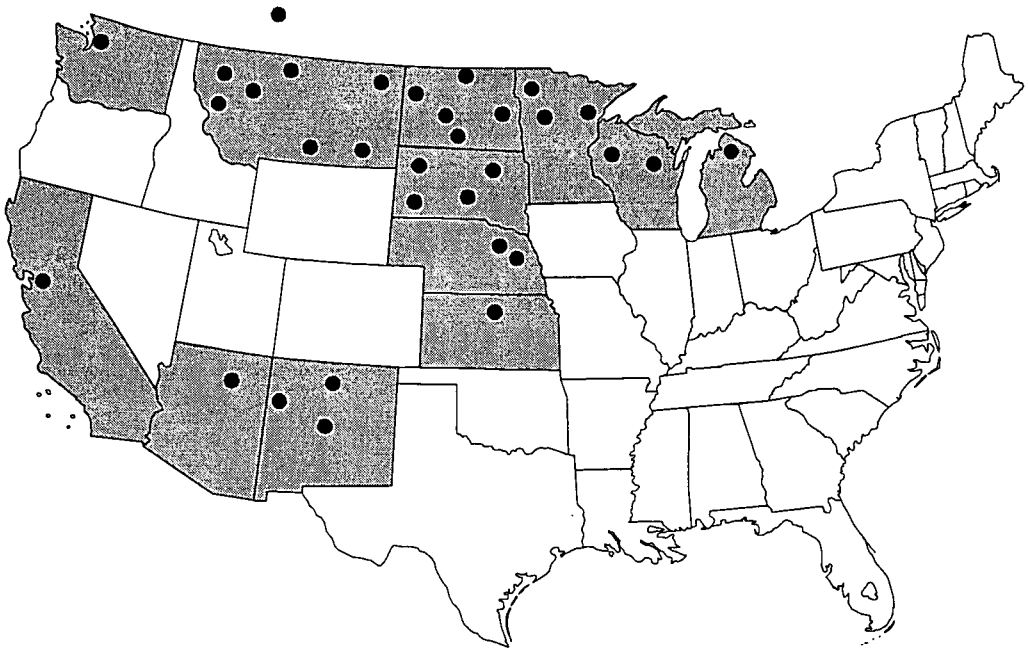
Tribal Colleges in the United States

Name	Location	Established	Chartering tribe(s)	Accreditation status
Bay Mills Community College	Brimley, MI	1984	Bay Mills Indian Community	Fully accredited
Blackfeet Community College	Browning, MT	1974	Blackfeet Tribal Business Council	Fully accredited
Cankdeska Cikana Community College	Fort Totten, ND	1974	Spirit Lake Sioux Tribal Council	Fully accredited
Cheyenne River Community College	Eagle Butte, SD	1974	Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Council	Candidate
College of the Menominee Nation	Keshena, WI	1993	Menominee Nation	Fully accredited
Crownpoint Institute of Technology	Crownpoint, NM	1979	Navajo Nation	Fully accredited
D-Q University	Davis, CA	1971	Coalition of 19 tribes and bands	Fully accredited
Diné College	Tsaile, AZ	1968	Navajo Nation	Fully accredited
Dull Knife Memorial College	Lame Deer, MT	1975	Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council	Fully accredited
Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College	Cloquet, MN	1987	Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa	Fully accredited
Fort Belknap College	Harlem, MT	1984	Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes	Fully accredited
Fort Berthold Community College	New Town, ND	1974	Three Affiliated Tribes of the Arikara, Hidatsa and Mandan	Fully accredited
Fort Peck Community College	Poplar, MT	1978	Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes	Fully accredited
Haskell Indian Nations University**	Lawrence, KS	1970	Federally chartered	Fully accredited
Institute of American Indian Arts	Santa Fe, NM	1988*	Congressionally chartered	Fully accredited
Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College	Hayward, WI	1982	Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa	Fully accredited
Leech Lake Tribal College	Cass Lake, MN	1990	Leech Lake Tribal Council	Candidate
Little Big Horn College	Crow Agency, MT	1980	Crow Tribal Council	Fully accredited
Little Priest Tribal College	Winnebago, NE	1996	Winnebago Tribe	Fully accredited
Nebraska Indian Community College	Niobrara, NE	1979	Omaha Tribal Council, Santee Sioux Tribe, and Yankton Sioux Tribe	Fully accredited
Northwest Indian College	Bellingham, WA	1983	Lummi Indian Business Council	Fully accredited
Oglala Lakota College	Kyle, SD	1971	Oglala Sioux Tribal Council	Fully accredited
Salish Kootenai College	Pablo, MT	1977	Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Council	Fully accredited
Sinte Gleska University	Rosebud, SD	1971	Rosebud Sioux Tribal Council	Fully accredited
Sisseton Wahpeton Community College	Sisseton, SD	1979	Sisseton Wahpeton Sioux Tribal Council	Fully accredited
Sitting Bull College	Fort Yates, ND	1973	Standing Rock Sioux Tribe	Fully accredited
Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute	Albuquerque, NM	1971	Federally chartered	Fully accredited
Stone Child College	Box Elder, MT	1984	Chippewa Cree Business Committee	Fully accredited
Turtle Mountain Community College	Belcourt, ND	1972	Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa	Fully accredited
United Tribes Technical College	Bismarck, ND	1969	North Dakota Development Corp (representing four tribes)	Fully accredited
White Earth Tribal and Community College	Mahnomen, MN	1997	White Earth Reservation Tribal Council	Precandidate

* IAIA was initially begun in 1962 as an experiment undertaken by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, but became a congressionally chartered educational institution in 1988.
** Haskell was founded in 1884 as an Indian boarding school.

Note: Red Crow Community College is a member of AIHEC, but is located in Canada.

Geographic Location of Tribal Colleges



WHAT MAKES TRIBAL COLLEGES UNIQUE?

Tribal Colleges are different from mainstream community colleges in their cultural identities, which are reflected in virtually every aspect of college life. In addition, Tribal Colleges are actively involved in a broad range of community efforts—including basic education, counseling services, and economic development initiatives—that are specifically focused on communities that would otherwise be completely isolated from such resources.

Cultural Studies

All parts of the colleges' curricula are designed from an American Indian perspective, and the individual courses reflect this effort. The colleges offer courses in tribal languages that might otherwise disappear, as well as other traditional subjects. For example, Bay Mills Community College offers a traditional tribal literature class—only in the winter term because the stories are supposed to be told when snow is on the ground—and Fort Belknap College offers a course on the economic history of the reservation (American Indian College Fund, 1996). At the same time, non-cultural courses attempt to reflect tribal philosophies of education. In particular, many of the colleges have responded to the need for more American Indian elementary and secondary school teachers, with teacher preparation programs of their own or collaborative programs with a state college or university (Pavel et al., 1995). Thus, Nebraska Indian Community College was awarded a grant for an Indian Teacher Education program for American Indian students who plan to obtain teaching certificates through nearby Wayne State College (American Indian College Fund, 1996).

Program profile

All students at Oglala Lakota College are required to take courses offered by the Lakota Studies Department, which provides a cultural focus for the entire college. The department offers community workshops, helps collect materials relevant to tribal history and culture, and is integral in efforts to maintain the Lakota language. The Tribal Leadership/Management Development Program develops courses of study in tribal leadership and management, which incorporate Lakota values and language. In particular, the master's degree program attempts to prepare students for future positions of leadership within the tribe.

Source: American Indian College Fund, 1996.

Furthermore, there are many American Indian role models at Tribal Colleges. In Fall 1995, 30 percent of full-time faculty at the colleges were American Indian/Alaskan Native, as were 79 percent of full-time staff members (NCES, 1990-97).[1] In comparison, less than 1 percent of full-time faculty and staff at all public institutions were American Indian/Alaskan Native.

Frequently, classes are taught by tribal elders and other non-traditional faculty members. Faculty have developed innovative curricula and teaching methodologies (Pavel et al., 1995), and the colleges have become centers of Indian research and scholarship. Tribal Colleges also work to instill an appreciation of tribal culture in non-Indian faculty members through such programs as Diné College's new Office for Diné Education Philosophy, which is developing a methodology that will apply traditional Navajo philosophy to the management of the school (American Indian College Fund, 1996).

Moreover, the colleges have become essential repositories of tribal knowledge. In 1996-97, virtually all Tribal Colleges had library facilities at the institution (NCES, 1990-97). In many of these cases, the libraries function as tribal archives. They collect documents and records that used to be kept elsewhere and record oral histories from tribal elders (Boyer, 1997). The Blackfeet Community College Library is not only the tribal library, but also the only postsecondary library in that part of Montana (American Indian College Fund, 1996). In addition to serving as the tribal library and archives, Tribal Colleges provide tribal communities with access to computer labs and interactive television.

College and Community

In addition to their uniquely designed education of American Indian students, Tribal Colleges play a vital role in the communities they serve. In 1996-97, for example, 22 Tribal Colleges reported offering adult basic education, remedial, or high school equivalency programs (NCES, 1990-97). These programs are available to the local community, and many of those who earn GEDs continue on to enroll in degree programs. Sitting Bull College, for example, operates Project BASIC, an adult learning program in which a mobile classroom serves the reservation's outlying districts (American Indian College Fund, 1996). After enrollment, the colleges continue to support students by offering tutoring programs

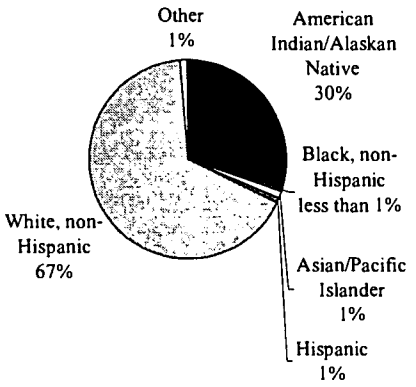
to build basic skills and active counseling programs. Some colleges also reach out to secondary school students—D-Q University's American Indian Young Scholars Program, for instance, provides academic preparation, research experience, and support services to high school students interested in pursuing energy-related majors (American Indian College Fund, 1996).

Because most reservation economies are stagnant, Tribal Colleges also actively seek to promote local economic development. In addition to offering an increasing number of entrepreneurial business courses, more than a dozen colleges sponsor business incubators or small business development centers in order to encourage private sector growth (Casey, 1998). Such centers offer a one-stop, community-based site for technical business assistance and advice. For example, Northwest Indian College on the Lummi reservation has its own Business Assistance Center and has established centers on seven other reservations in Washington. Students can earn a one-year certificate in entrepreneurship through this program, which offers courses via satellite. In addition to an associate's degree program in entrepreneurship, Haskell Indian Nations University offers a training program targeted at Tribal College faculty to develop and teach case studies on Indian entrepreneurs (Foley Chuckluck, 1998).

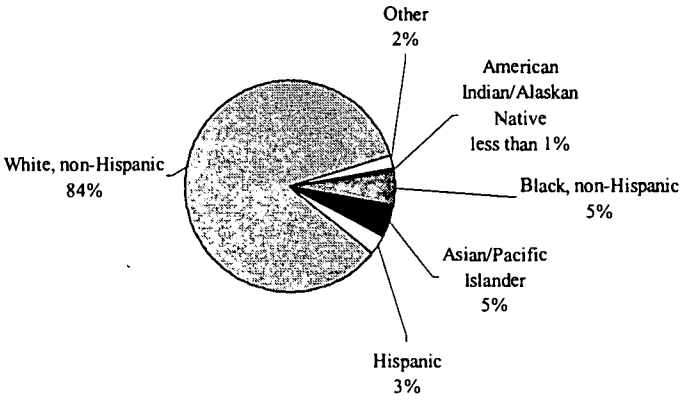
Finally, the colleges provide many services to the community and act as gathering points for tribal members. Because so many students have family responsibilities, the colleges often operate on-campus day-care facilities for children of students. In 1996-97, for example, 10 colleges reported offering such facilities (NCES,

Full-Time Faculty by Race/Ethnicity, 1995

Tribal Colleges



All Public Institutions



Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.
Source: NCES, 1990-1997.

1990-1997), many of which are open to the wider community as well. In addition, the colleges provide substance abuse counseling, nutritional counseling, and other services. Leech Lake Tribal College has even initiated a cooperative program with the tribal government called Project Grow, which attempts to address the high incidence of diabetes on the reservation by improving the community's diet with traditional Indian crops (American Indian College Fund, 1996).

[1] Only 22 colleges reported staff information to IPEDS in 1995.

HOW MANY STUDENTS DO TRIBAL COLLEGES SERVE?

Since the initial years of the Tribal College movement, enrollment at the colleges has increased at a rapid rate. In 1982, enrollment at the colleges stood at approximately 2,100 (O'Brien, 1992). By 1995-96, however, enrollment over the 12-month academic period reached 24,363 undergraduates and 260 graduate students.[1] The number of undergraduates ranged from several thousand at Diné College to less than 200 at the Institute of American Indian Arts.

Because Tribal College students "stop-out" or skip semesters more frequently than do traditional undergraduates—similar to students at community colleges overall—fall enrollment figures are lower. In 1996, fall enrollment totaled 16,689 undergraduates, approximately half of them full-time and half part-time, and 151 post-baccalaureate students. This represents a substantial increase—43 percent—from the fall of 1990, in which the colleges reported a total of 11,767 students (NCES, 1990-1997).[2]

In a sign of the growing influence of the Tribal College movement, during the 1990s Tribal College enrollment has increased more rapidly than has American Indian enrollment at mainstream institutions. Between 1990 and 1996, fall enrollment of American Indian students at Tribal Colleges increased by 62 percent. In comparison, American Indian enrollment increased by 36 percent at mainstream colleges over the same period. The growth in enrollment at Tribal Colleges was concentrated in a few states: California, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, and South Dakota. In each of these states, enrollment of American Indians increased at a faster rate at Tribal Colleges than at mainstream institutions.

Moreover, in three of these states—Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota—the majority of American Indian college students are enrolled at Tribal Colleges (NCES, 1990-1997; Hines and Higham, 1997).

Measures of enrollment

The National Center for Education Statistics uses several measures of student enrollment at postsecondary institutions:

- *An unduplicated headcount during a 12-month period* measures the total number of students enrolled during the 12-month reporting period in any courses leading to a degree or that are part of a vocational or occupational program. Each student is counted only once during the reporting period. Unduplicated 12-month enrollment at Tribal Colleges reached 24,623 in 1995-96.

- *Fall headcount enrollment* measures the number of students enrolled for credit or in a vocational or occupational program at the institution as of October 15 of that year, or on the institution's official fall reporting date. Each student is counted only once during the reporting period. Fall 1996 enrollment at Tribal Colleges was 16,840.

- *Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment* attempts to adjust enrollment figures by attendance patterns. All full-time students are counted, plus a portion of part-time students. FTE enrollment can be used for either 12-month or fall periods. FTE enrollment at Tribal Colleges for fall 1996 was 11,221.

In addition, a special enrollment measure is used by the Bureau of Indian Affairs for Tribal Colleges in particular:

- *Indian Student Count (ISC)* measures the number of FTE American Indian/Alaskan Native students enrolled according to a specific formula, for the purposes of distributing funds under the Tribally Controlled College or University Assistance Act. In FY 1999, the ISC count for all 26 colleges funded under this Act was 9,232 (BIA, 1998).

[1] These enrollment figures include data from only the 29 colleges that reported to IPEDS; Little Priest Tribal College, White Earth Tribal and Community College and Red Crow Community College are not included. Graduate numbers include only Oglala Lakota College and Sinte Gleska University.

[2] Figures for 1996 include data from 28 colleges (in addition to the colleges noted in the previous footnote, the College of the Menominee Nation is not included), while 1990 figures include only 20 colleges.

Comparison of Indian Fall Enrollment, 1990 and 1996

State	Indian students at non-tribal colleges, 1990	Indian students at non-tribal colleges, 1996	% increase	Indian students at tribal colleges, 1990	Indian students at tribal colleges, 1996	% increase	Tribal college students as % of total, 1990	Tribal college students as % of total, 1996
AZ	7,418	10,140	37%	1,424	1,604	13%	16%	14%
CA	21,253	22,852	8%	123	190	54%	1%	1%
KS	1,141	1,865	63%	831	819	-1%	42%	31%
MI	3,563	4,229	19%	N.A.	261	_	_	6%
MN	2,010	2,985	49%	N.A.	27	_	_	1%
MT	991	1,426	44%	1,442	2,320	61%	59%	62%
ND	666	913	37%	950	1,382	45%	59%	60%
NE	488	862	77%	241	272	13%	33%	24%
NM	4,440	6,979	57%	170	939	452%	4%	12%
SD	778	883	13%	1,134	1,555	37%	59%	64%
WA	3,868	6,140	59%	N.A.	567	_	_	8%
WI	2,051	2,335	14%	N.A.	298	_	_	11%
Total	96,656	131,902	36%	6,315	10,234	62%	8%	7%

Notes: Data on Tribal College students for fall 1996 include 28 colleges, while figures for fall 1990 include 20 colleges. Data in 1990 were not available for some of the colleges because they did not report to IPEDS in that year, did not provide fall enrollment figures, or had not been established.
Source: NCES, 1990-1997.

WHO GOES TO TRIBAL COLLEGES?

Tribal College students share many traits, including some that present challenges in a higher education setting—such as family obligations and low household incomes. Nevertheless, the available evidence suggests that students are satisfied with their experiences at Tribal Colleges and are completing degrees, transferring to four-year institutions, and finding gainful employment.

Composition of Student Bodies

In general, Tribal Colleges provide access for local students who might not otherwise participate in higher education; in fact, most of those enrolled are the first generation in their family to go to college. American Indian students make up the plurality of Tribal College student bodies.

Tribal College students are largely non-traditional. In 1997, data from the Bureau of Indian Affairs showed an average age of 31.5, well above the traditional college age of 18 to 24 (BIA, 1998). The typical student is often described as a single mother in her early 30s, and the American Indian College Fund estimates that over half of Tribal College students are single parents. In addition, half of all Tribal College students attend on a part-time basis. In fall 1996, this ranged from 84 percent of undergraduates at Dull Knife Memorial College to less than 15 percent at the three federally chartered colleges (NCES, 1990-1997).

Tribal Colleges serve a disproportionate number of female students. In fall 1996, 56 percent of undergraduates at all public institutions were women, while 64

percent of all Tribal College undergraduates were women. This differed by institution: 76 percent of undergraduates at Sisseton Wahpeton Community College were female, compared to only 46 percent at Haskell Indian Nations University (NCES, 1990-1997).

Student Financial Aid

Financial aid is a critical resource for Tribal College students. Despite relatively low family income levels, however, they tend to have less access to the range of financial aid available to other students. For example, state and institutional sources together account for 25 percent of aid provided to all U.S. college students, but less than 1 percent of aid provided to Tribal College students (AIHEC and The Institute, 1996).

Tribal College students receive the majority of their financial aid through the federal Pell Grant program. In 1996-97, more than 7,000 Tribal College students received Pell Grants, with an average award of $1,629.

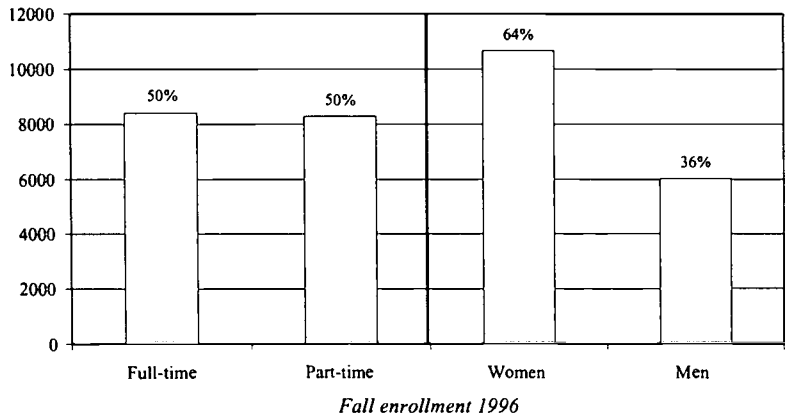
Student profile

Paula Healy, a student at Fort Belknap College and an enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, exemplifies the typical tribal college student. She is majoring in business and has been able to achieve a 4.0 grade point average. She plans to continue her education at Montana State University. Meanwhile, she is raising four children and hopes to graduate from college before her oldest son graduates from high school (American Indian College Fund, 1998b).

This represented nearly 35 percent of all Tribal College undergraduates; however, the proportion of students receiving Pell Grants varied by institution, from 17 percent at Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College to 70 percent at the Institute of American Indian Arts (USDE, 1996-1997).[1] It is important to recognize that despite their low incomes, many Tribal College students may not receive Pell Grants due to a combination of their attendance patterns—many students take very few credit hours—and low tuition levels. In addition, many Tribal College students fail to apply for financial aid at all.

Financial aid support from other sources remains limited. By choice, Tribal Colleges generally do not participate in the campus-based

Aggregate Composition of Undergraduate Student Bodies



Fall enrollment 1996

Source: NCES, 1990-97

Perkins Loan program, and very few Tribal College students borrow Stafford Loans—in 1994-95, only about 200 students borrowed just over $400,000 (AIHEC and The Institute , 1996). Approximately 8 percent of Tribal College students received Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants in 1996-97, with an average award of $411. In addition, about 3 percent of Tribal College students received an average of $851 in federal work-study funds. These average awards are lower than those of mainstream institutions due to "grandfather" clauses in the legislation that favor older institutions that have participated in the programs the longest (Billy, 1998). To supplement government funding, many Tribal College students receive aid from private sources, including the American Indian College Fund, which raises money for scholarships.

Signs of Student Success

Tribal Colleges are doing an effective job of educating their students. For example, Tribal College students are earning degrees, transferring to four-year institutions, and obtaining jobs. In addition, anecdotal reports from Tribal College admissions officers indicate that American Indian students are choosing Tribal Colleges over mainstream institutions. This is supported by the previously mentioned data on comparative enrollment of American Indian students, and by the fact that many Tribal College presidents note that the student bodies of their colleges are gradually becoming younger.

Although information on the number of Tribal College students earning degrees is limited, available data suggest that a significant percentage of Tribal College students are completing degrees. At the 16 colleges that reported completions data for 1996-97, 936 degrees were awarded, including 409 associate's degrees, 58 bachelor's degrees, and two master's degrees. Of all of these degrees, 84 percent were awarded to American Indian/Alaskan Native students and 67 percent were awarded to women (NCES, 1990-1997).

A substantial proportion of Tribal College students continue on to four-year institutions after earning a degree at a Tribal College, most of which have strong relationships with state colleges and universities to facilitate transfers. For example, about 70 percent of students at D-Q University transfer to four-year colleges after earning an associate's degree (American Indian College Fund, 1996). One study of students from Salish Kootenai College found that American Indian students who had attended the college and then transferred to the University of Montana earned higher grade point averages and had higher graduation rates than American Indian students who had gone to the university directly from high school (Zaglauer, 1993).

Another important measure of success is the relatively low unemployment rate of Tribal College graduates, especially given the high rates prevalent on most reservations. Although comprehensive data are currently unavailable, isolated studies have found reason for optimism. A survey of Turtle Mountain Community College graduates from 1980 to 1990 found that less than 13 percent were unemployed, in contrast with a much higher rate of unemployment of 55 percent on the reservation as a whole (Boyer, 1997; American Indian College Fund, 1996). A few other colleges have tracking systems in place and can report high percentages of

graduates who are employed, including: Crownpoint Institute of Technology, 85 percent; Little Big Horn College, 87 percent; and Oglala Lakota College, 93 percent (Boyer, 1997).

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[1] Fiscal Operations Report and Application to Participate (FISAP) data for 1996-97 are missing information from Fort Belknap College, Cheyenne River Community College, White Earth Tribal and Community College and Little Priest Tribal College.

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO TRIBAL COLLEGES?

The treaty obligations and trust responsibility between the sovereign Indian tribes and nations and the U.S. federal government sets Tribal Colleges apart from mainstream institutions in a specific way: the federal government is committed to providing funding for Indians for a variety of programs, including higher education. This commitment is especially important because Tribal Colleges receive little or no funding from state governments, as states have no obligation to fund them due to their location on federal trust territory. The status of reservations as federal trust territory also prevents the levying of local property taxes to support higher education—an important source of revenue for most mainstream community colleges.

Core Operational Funding

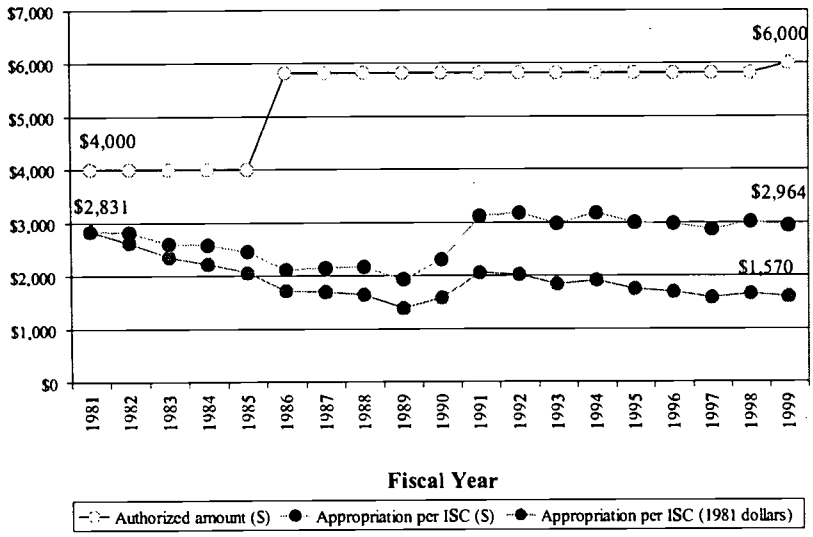
As a result of the lack of local or state support, Tribal Colleges rely heavily on federal funds for their core operational funding. In particular, they depend on the funds distributed through the Tribally Controlled College or University Assistance Act of 1978 (TCCUAA) and administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs for their operating expenses. The Act authorizes funding through several sections:

- Title I currently allocates funding to 25 of the colleges through a formula based on the number of Indian students enrolled (called the Indian Student Count, or ISC).[1] No funds are distributed for non-Indian students, who make up a significant percentage of total enrollment at Title I schools on average. Title I is authorized at a per Indian student level of $6,000, with a maximum total amount of $40 million.

- Title II provides funding for core operations for Diné College.
- Title III provides matching funds for endowment grants, and is authorized at $10 million. However, appropriations have never surpassed $1 million.
- Title IV is authorized at $2 million to finance local economic development projects, but funding has never been appropriated.
- In addition, funds are authorized for Facilities Renovation and Technical Assistance.

Recently total appropriations have increased sightly, after remaining static for many years in real terms (The Institute, 1997; AIHEC, unpublished data). In Fiscal Year 1999, total appropriations reached $30 million. Nevertheless, appropriations for Title I schools in particular have never matched the authorized levels. The current funding per Indian student, $2,964, is now less than half the authorized amount of $6,000. Despite the increases in total appropriations, the Title I funding per Indian student has increased only slightly since 1981—by $133—and in fact has decreased by 45 percent when inflation is considered. This is primarily because enrollment growth has outpaced the small increases in appropriations from Congress, and because the number of eligible Title I colleges has grown.

TCCUAA Appropriations to Title I Schools



Note: In FY1988, the Title I distribution formula was changed from FTE American Indian students to ISC; the latter is slightly higher because the count is taken earlier and because all credit hours are counted. Inflation adjusted figures are in 1981 dollars using CPI-U (1982-84=100). The figures for 1998 and 1999 were estimated assuming that the increase in CPI remained constant at about four index points per year.

Source: The Institute, 1997; AIHEC, unpublished data; Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Since the authorized amounts have never been fully realized, Title I Tribal Colleges operate with significantly less funding per student than mainstream colleges. Estimates indicate that community colleges will receive an average of $4,743 per FTE student from federal, state, and local govemment revenues in Fiscal Year 1999.[2]

Other Funding Sources

To make up for the shortfall in revenue, most Tribal Colleges must charge tuitions that are high given the poverty levels of

the communities they serve. In 1996-97, in-state tuition and fees at the tribally controlled colleges averaged $1,950. In comparison to mainstream colleges, this average was 52 percent higher than tuition and fees for public two-year institutions, and were only slightly lower than the average for all two-year and four-year public institutions (NCES, 1997b; NCES, 1990-97).

Tribal Colleges also receive limited funds from other sources.

- Some colleges, not funded through the TCCUAA, receive core operational funding through other federal mechanisms. For example, United Tribes Technical College and Crownpoint Institute of Technology receive funds through the *Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act*—together, they received $3.1 million in Fiscal Year 1998. These two colleges are ineligible to receive funding under the TCCUAA because the Act limits funding to only one Tribal College per tribe (Billy, 1998).[3] Haskell Indian Nations University and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, which are owned and operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Institute for American Indian Arts, which is Congressionally chartered, also receive funding through separate authorization.

- The Tribal Colleges benefit from 1994 federal legislation awarding them *land-grant status*. They join 55 state universities and 17 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), which were designated as land-grant institutions in the 19th century. This new designation helps the Tribal Colleges become more visible and connected to mainstream institutions, by sharing projects, resources, and information with other land-grant colleges (St. Pierre and Stein, 1997). The colleges (collectively called the "1994 institutions") receive equity grants—$50,000 per institution—to strengthen agricultural and natural resources; share the interest from an endowment fund that receives $4.6 million annually; and may compete for funding for extension programs (about $2 million in total). In addition, the creation of a new research program was authorized in FY 1999. However, total appropriations for the programs authorized for all 29 eligible institutions[4] are approximately equal to the amount given to just one state land-grant college each year (Billy, 1998). The colleges will use the funds available to them to help reservation communities develop potential in the following areas: nutrition, youth, economic development, family development, natural resources, agriculture, and community development.

- In addition, some Tribal Colleges—like other minority-serving institutions—receive funding from Title III under the Higher Education Act, the *Aid for Institutional Development program*. In Fiscal Year 1998, Tribal Colleges had eight ongoing competitive grants under Part A, for a total of $2.6 million out of the more than $55 million available (Billy, 1998). In Fiscal Year 1999 the Tribal Colleges will join HBCUs and Hispanic-serving institutions by getting a separate section under Title III. This new section was authorized at $10 million, but ac-

tually only received appropriations of $3 million.

- Finally, Tribal Colleges receive minimal funding from other sources, including state block grant programs for adult education; the Minority Science Improvement Program; Environmental Management Grants; and other specially directed funds. The U.S. Department of Agriculture recently announced rural development grants to four colleges—Cankdeska Cikana Community College, Crownpoint Institute of Technology, Fort Peck Community College, and Nebraska Indian Community College—to strengthen aspects of the agricultural programs and make them "Centers of Excellence" in the nationwide rural development network (*Tribal College Journal*, Spring/Summer 1998, pp. 38-39+).

It is important to recognize that only five of the Tribal Colleges receive any income from gaming (American Indian College Fund, 1998a); in addition, such funds—when received—are relatively small and unstable. The misperception exists that tribes either operate casinos themselves or receive a portion of the revenue from other tribes' casinos. In fact, only a fraction of tribes own casinos, and tribes generally do not share revenue because they are sovereign entities.

Given the Tribal Colleges' chronic underfunding, the White House Executive Order on Tribal Colleges and Universities (No. 13021) was signed in order to more fully integrate the colleges into federal programs. This document, issued by President Clinton on October 19, 1996, reaffirms the important role Tribal Colleges play in reservation development by directing all federal de-

College profile

Bay Mills Community College is located in the Bay Mills Indian Community on the upper peninsula of Michigan. Since it was chartered in 1984, the college has offered courses on the eleven reservations in the state. More recently the college has created a virtual college offering courses via the internet to students in 17 states.

The college grew out of a vocational program funded by the tribal Department of Education. It began in the basement of the Tribal Center, but moved to an unused fish-processing plant when it outgrew the space. Since then, the building has been expanded three times. In addition, a library building was completed in 1990, and 10 townhouses were added in 1993 to fill the need for student housing. All the buildings at Bay Mills are purified with sage at least twice a year.

Bay Mills Community College attempts to build Indian culture into the curriculum as well as offering traditional coursework and vocational training. In addition, the college uses flexible classroom settings, individual instruction, and computer tutorials to meet the various academic needs of its students.

Source: American Indian College Fund, 1996.

partments and agencies to increase their support to the colleges. The initiative hopes to direct more attention toward the colleges, but also bring in more resources and create greater opportunities.

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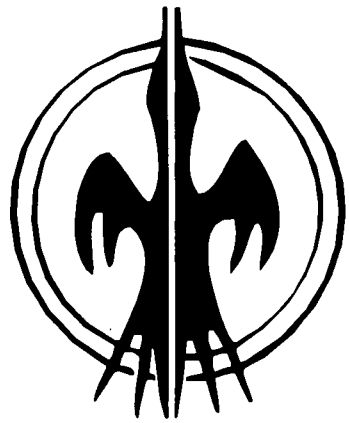
[1]As of FY 1999, Medicine Creek Tribal College is eligible to receive funding under Title I, but is not currently a member of AIHEC.

[2]AIHEC estimates based on data from AACC, 1998.

[3] The Navajo Nation charters both Crownpoint and Diné College; United Tribes is chartered by four tribes in North Dakota, all of which have their own tribal colleges.

[4]Little Priest Tribal College will be funded as of Fiscal Year 1999, bringing the total to 30.

ISSUES FOR FURTHER EXAMINATION



There are many issues that Tribal Colleges will need to address in the future in order to maintain quality higher education for their students. Many of these are closely linked with financing problems, and can only be resolved by increasing core operational funds. They generally fall into two categories: 1) aspects of the institutions themselves, such as faculty and facilities; and 2) broader policies affecting the institutions, including the growth of distance learning and recent changes in welfare laws.

Faculty and Staff

Despite the success of Tribal Colleges in recruiting a comparatively large proportion of American Indian faculty, recruiting and retaining faculty to teach at Tribal Colleges remains a problem. One reason for this difficulty is the geographic isolation of the colleges; another is the fact that representation of American Indians among faculty throughout the United States remains disproportionately small, effectively limiting the supply of such faculty to the colleges. Due to accrediting agencies placing increased emphasis on academic credentials, and the relative undereducation of American Indian people nation-wide, Tribal Colleges have frequently turned to non-Indian instructors who have Ph.D.s (Tierney, 1992). Nonetheless, the colleges hope that many of their former students will return as faculty members—in fact, several of the college presidents (who also frequently teach) attended Tribal Colleges.

Average faculty salaries are low—$23,964 for full-time faculty on nine- or ten-month contracts in 1996-97. In comparison, the average salary was $49,855 at all public institutions in the United States, and $43,730 at pub-

lic two-year institutions (NCES, 1990-1997). Staff at the Tribal Colleges face similar challenges of low salaries, geographic isolation, and frequently a lack of training. As a result, high staff turnover remains a problem for the colleges.

Maintenance and Construction of Facilities

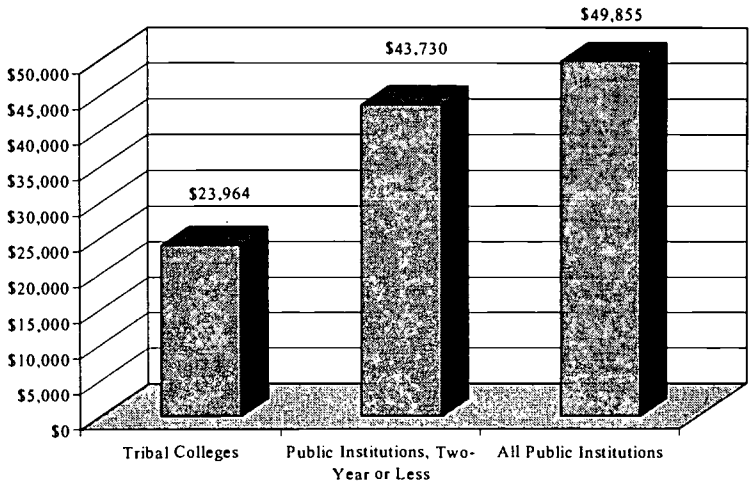
The quality and number of facilities continue to present a problem for Tribal Colleges, most of which have decentralized, ad hoc campuses. Many of the colleges operate in abandoned or donated buildings, in which hazards such as leaking roofs and crumbling foundations abound. Frequently, the colleges do not even have blueprints for some of their buildings, which adds to renovation costs.

Although many of the colleges have identified facility maintenance and construction as a high priority, most of them are forced to choose to put available money into instruction and related expenses instead (AIHEC, 1998a).

Thirteen of the Tribal Colleges report that they need to increase the number of campus classrooms, at a estimated cost of more than $18 million. Other facilities that are needed include science and math laboratories, library buildings, community centers, and child care facilities (AIHEC, 1998a).

Although the TCCUAA has a provision for facilities renovation that is authorized at $1.8 million, it has not been funded to date, and the core operational funding under Titles I and II cannot be used for new construction. Some colleges, such as the College of the Menominee Nation, have received government or private grants to build state-of-the-art facilities. Others such as Salish Kootenai College and Stone Child College have relied on students enrolled in their building trades programs to construct new facilities and make renovations.

Average Full-Time Faculty Salaries, 1996-97



Note: Includes only faculty on 9- to 10- month contracts. Tribal Colleges figure was calculated for the 14 tribally controlled colleges that reported to IPEDS.
Source: NCES, 1990-1997.

Technology/Distance Learning

Tribal Colleges frequently use distance learning to encourage access and retention. Such methods also allow them to offer courses at many satellite locations, within the reservation or on other reservations in the state. All of the colleges participate in a network that allows

them to increase the number of courses they offer by using satellite technology to downlink them from other sites (AIHEC, 1998b). In addition, several colleges offer courses from state universities through teledistance. For example, Crownpoint Institute of Technology is becoming the hub for the Navajo Nation Area-Wide Network, and is developing plans for interactive distance learning in cooperation with Northern Arizona University. Sitting Bull College has installed an interactive telecommunications network that allows students to take classes at colleges and universities in North Dakota via two-way video (American Indian College Fund, 1996).

In addition, many of the colleges have identified expanding technology and purchasing equipment as a high priority for the future. Some colleges have been able to take advantage of grants to improve technology—funds through a Title III Strengthening Institutions grant allowed Sisseton Wahpeton Community College to upgrade computers, access the Internet, and wire the library with fiber-optics. Yet most do not have money available to invest in such purposes and keeping up with advancing requirements will be difficult (American Indian College Fund, 1996).

Welfare Reform

The recently enacted welfare reform legislation, with its stricter work and job training requirements, is expected to have significant effects on the Tribal Colleges. With extremely high unemployment rates on the reservations, increasing numbers of welfare recipients are turning to the colleges for remedial education and job training activities.

Tribal Colleges are often the only agency to assist welfare recipients with skill development. Under the new welfare provisions, American Indian applicants will be referred to either the tribal jobs program, a state jobs program (if one is available), or the local community college or tribal college. In most cases, the recipient must be employed within 24 months of applying. Individuals who are disqualified will have to apply for General Assistance, another Indian welfare program administered through the Bureau of Indian Affairs. However, the amount of money available for General Assistance has been steadily declining on tribal college reservations (Shanley, 1997). Given the high numbers of welfare recipients on the reservations, this process will greatly impact local communities and the colleges that serve them. Other potential problems include shortages of facilities and instructors; insufficient time to bring people through remediation and instill job skills; inadequate day care facilities; and the lack of employment opportunities on the reservations (Shanley, 1997).

It seems clear that both states and tribes will look to the colleges to train Indians and non-Indians on the reservation. Thus, the most obvious impact is likely to be increasing enrollments at most of the colleges. Most of the welfare recipients served by the colleges will need basic adult education and GED programs. However, TCCUAA funding is based on the number of American Indian students, who must meet certain basic literacy requirements; the colleges do not receive federal funds for non-Indians or for remedial and GED programs. Therefore, the colleges will have less money per student to spend on instruction and other services.

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